

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Resolution Re: Determinations and Findings

In the South End Renewal Area R-56

WHEREAS, Boston Redevelopment Authority (hereinafter called the ("Authority")) is a public body, politic and corporate, duly organized and existing under the provisions of the Housing Authority Law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and having a usual place of business in the City of Boston, Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has, with the approval of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Boston and with financial assistance provided under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, by the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the United States of America, undertaken and conducted surveys, studies and inspections of an area in the City of Boston, known and referred to as the South End Renewal Area (hereinafter called the "Project Area"), for which area the Authority is preparing an urban renewal plan, and in which the Authority proposes to undertake an urban renewal project, said area being more particularly described as Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has, after due and proper notice, held a public hearing with respect to the Project Area and, at said hearing, received and heard extensive evidence, data, exhibits, views and opinions with respect to said Project Area and its conditions, including (a) statements, data and statistics presented by officials of the City of Boston respecting fire control problems in the Project Area and their causes, and law enforcement problems in the Project Area and their causes, (b) statements, study reports and extensive exhibits prepared and presented by members of the Authority's staff, including detailed explanations of the study procedures used by the staff, detailed descriptions of the Project Area, the physical conditions and uses of land and structures therein, historical data respecting the economic and land use trends therein, inspection reports respecting the physical condition of every structure in the Project Area, and extensive folios of interior and exterior



photographs disclosing the appearance and physical condition of structures throughout the Project Area and in every section thereof and (c) statements, opinions, views and data from various interested individuals, and representatives of various organizations pertaining to the conditions existing in the Project Area; and

WHEREAS, the Authority has at said public hearing also received and heard evidence as to the Castle Square portion of the Project Area, being that portion bounded by Tremont, Dover, Washington and Herald (formerly Castle Streets, including evidence as to the condition of the Castle Square area, statements, opinions, views and data from members of the Authority's staff and from various interested individuals as to the advisability of acquiring, demolishing and relocating the Castle Square area under the so-called Early Land Acquisition Program;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Boston Redevelopment Authority acting under and pursuant to its powers under the provisions of said Housing Authority Law and any other powers thereunto enabling, does hereby determine, declare and find 1) that the Project Area is a substandard and decadent area in that it is an area wherein dwellings predominate which by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston Community, and that it is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and the sound growth of the Boston community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete or in need of major maintenance and repair, and because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and in which under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, and because of a substantial change in business and economic conditions, and because of inadequate light, air and open space, and because of excessive land coverage, and because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes and obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary



operations of private enterprise, and 2) that the Castle Square portion of the Project Area is a substandard and decadent area in that it is an area wherein dwellings predominate which by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement of design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston Community, and which is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and the sound growth of the Boston Community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete or in need of major maintenance and repair, and because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and in which under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, and because of a substantial change in business and economic conditions, and because of inadequate light, air and open space, and because of excessive land coverage, and because of diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes and obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operation of private enterprise,

Be it Further Resolved that the Boston Redevelopment Authority does hereby determine, declare and find the following particular facts to be true and correct:

I. South End Renewal Area

1. Obsolescence: Most buildings in the Project Area are between 80 and 125 years old. Most residential structures were originally built as single attached row type dwellings and many have been converted into rooming and lodging houses, frequently shared by from four to ten unrelated lodgers. They are built on narrow lots (15 to 20 feet) and, in many cases, lack fire escapes and dual egress.
2. Dilapidation: Recent surveys indicate that only 34.4% of some 4,125 parcels containing major structures have structures which are in satisfactory condition or require only minor repairs. Some 658 of 4,783 parcels in the Project Area were found to be cleared and vacant. Some



1,800 structures, or 43.6% of the total, were found to be in need of major repairs, while 909 structures, or 22.8% were considered to be beyond repair.

3. Mixed Character or Shifting of Uses: Most of the major radial streets of the Project Area are flanked by buildings having commercial uses on the ground floor and living quarters in the several floors above. Many such businesses are submarginal and unattractive, and include junk shops, pawn shops, package stores, plumbing and sheet metal shops, taverns and related activities, etc. Forty percent of all residential structures within the Project Area are lodging houses, all originally built as single dwelling units. Industrial and commercial uses have encroached upon residential districts resulting in through traffic, noise and unsightliness. There is no clear dividing line separating industrial, commercial and residential uses.

4. Overcrowding: Fifty-two percent of all residential structures are built on the street line, with the remaining structures having set-backs of three to ten feet. Average residential building coverage is about 55%, with a range from 39% to 100%. Off-street parking and loading space for non-residential uses has been obtained for the most part by demolishing nearby structures, with commercial deliveries generally from the street. Excessive dwelling unit density is indicated throughout with some blocks running as high as 250 units per net acre, and others as low as 50. There is a 15% vacancy rate, but many of these vacant units are substandard. Some 800 buildings have been demolished as unsafe within the past ten years and the remaining population as a result has been compressed into existing structures, many of which are substandard.

5. Unsafe and Inadequate Streets: Although streets are generally straight and of adequate width, they tend to be flooded with heavy traffic since South End is a corridor connecting Downtown Boston with populous areas to the southwest. The area contains six radial through streets. Streets tend to be, therefore, unsafe, congested



and obsolescent. About 83% of South End traffic does not terminate in the Project Area, and the physical safety of small children and the aged is a continual psychological and physical hazard, particularly because of the very heavy amounts of truck traffic.

6. Inadequate Public Utilities and Community Facilities:

Adequate public facilities and community facilities are essential to satisfactory living conditions and to an increase in the economic potential of the Project Area. Recreational facilities are the most inadequate in the city, with only two major playgrounds in the entire Project Area. Underground utilities must be replaced. New street lighting, repaving and widening of present streets and sidewalks are required in many sections. Six of the nine active public schools are over 75 years old and are, by present standards, out-moded and substandard.

II. Castle Square Portion of the Project Area

1. High Density: The dwelling structures in the Castle Square Portion of the Project Area consisting of three and four-story buildings, have an average density of 85.2 dwelling units per net residential acre, ranging from a low of 55 to a high of 130 dwelling units per unit residential acre.
2. Overcrowding: Residential site coverage in the Castle Square Portion of the Project Area varies from a low of about 55% to a high of 100% with the estimated average coverage of 70% and most commercial buildings cover 100% of their sites without any provisions for off-street loading and unloading facilities.
3. Mixed Character or Shifting of Uses: Buildings used for both residential and commercial are concentrated along the major traffic streets namely, Dover Street, Tremont Street, Washington Street and Shawmut Avenue. This mixed use characteristically appears as a business use on the ground floor with residential units above. There



are 315 structures in the Castle Square Portion of the Project Area and 89 of these structures are mixed use which occupy 3.36 acres. Non-residential space in the mixed residential and non-residential category is visually unattractive and often is occupied by a marginal business. The buildings in mixed uses are so located as to have detrimental effect on the entire Project Area.

4. Dilapidation: Ninety-three percent of the structures inspected in the Castle Square Portion of the Project Area were found to have considerable structural deterioration, 83 of the structures were found to have serious structural deterioration and the extent of such deterioration in 50% of these dwelling units were found to represent an extreme hazard to health and safety. The deterioration of structures is further evidenced by the fact that 34 tax foreclosures have occurred for non-payment of taxes and there are an estimated total of 73 parcels which have tax liens placed upon them for failure of the owners to pay real estate taxes.
5. Defective Lot Layout. Eighty-one percent of the residential lots were found to be less than 5,000 square feet in size. The area devoted to streets in the Castle Square Portion of the Project Area is excessive, with forty-three percent of the gross area being devoted to streets and alleys. One street, designed for vehicles, is only ten feet wide. There are 18 dead end alleys, of which some are but five feet wide.

Thence turning and running in a southwesterly direction along the southerly side line of Washington Street to a point which is the intersection of the southerly side line of Washington Street with extended westerly side line of Ball Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along the westerly side line of Ball Street to the corner of Shawmut Avenue;

Thence turning and running in a southwesterly direction along the southerly side line of Shawmut Avenue to a point which is the intersection of the southerly side line of Shawmut Avenue with the extended westerly side line of Windsor Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along the westerly side line of Windsor Street to a point which is the intersection of the westerly side line of Windsor Street with the extended westerly side line of Cunard Street;

Thence turning slightly and running in a northwesterly direction along the westerly side line of Cunard Street to Tremont Street;

Thence turning and running in a westerly direction along the southerly side line of Tremont Street to a point which is the intersection of the southerly side of Tremont Street with the extended westerly side line of Walpole Street;

Thence turning and running in a northwesterly direction along westerly side of Walpole Street to the point of beginning.